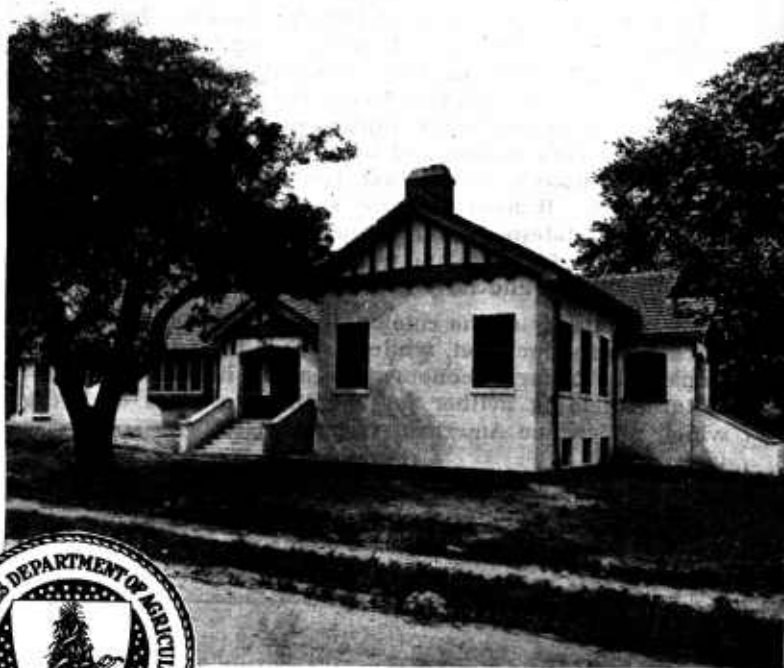


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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE  
FARMERS' BULLETIN No. 1274

USES OF  
RURAL COMMUNITY  
BUILDINGS



**T**HE RURAL COMMUNITY HOUSE has demonstrated that it is of great benefit to American agriculture. Farmers in the capacity of human beings mean more to farming, as everybody knows, than does soil or acreage; for, in the long run, the man and the woman on the farm, when backed by a household possessing character, and when surrounded and supported by the spirit of a strong community, carry the day in farm enterprises against heavy odds. This is true, because, as one sees on every hand, with the man and the woman lie intelligence and method; with the family lies the impulse of human ideals; and with the community lies co-operative power.

Successful farming, therefore, always must wait upon the intelligent, disciplined movements of farm men and women as human beings; upon the stability of farm households as spiritual forces; and upon the cooperative character of farm communities as the smaller democracies of civilization. American farming to-day, it must be admitted, stands impatiently waiting, and, much as impetuous agricultural thinkers may deplore the fact, must continue waiting and marking time until the human side of farm life manages to catch up with the technical side of farming.

In America the formulas of farm production, farm management, farm finance, and farm marketing, however short of the goal they may be, have certainly stolen a march on the life side of farming and forged ahead—ahead of American farm health and health appliances; ahead of the American farm home's standard of living; ahead of the American farm community's educational equipment and municipal organization. It need surprise no one, therefore, to find agricultural statesmen putting their shoulders to the wheel of progress in farm life and human welfare in order to help food production and farm profits.

The popularity of the community house is in great measure due to the fact that, while it speeds the advance of the human side of farm economy, it remains beneficial to agriculture, yielding neither jot nor tittle to ways of living which undermine American farming itself.

C. J. GALPIN.

# USES OF RURAL COMMUNITY BUILDINGS.

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## REVIVAL OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT.

THE REVIVAL OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT in the country has become more and more a feature of American life. Neighborliness is keeping pace with other forms of progress in small towns and rural communities. In colonial times people went to the meeting-house as a common gathering-place for mutual aid and self-development. During the Revolutionary period the people gathered in the town-meeting house for political and social purposes. In the days of the settlement of the West the people used to come together in the "little red school house," the one-roomed church, the hall over the grocery store, or "to meet round" from house to house, in order to gratify their social desires. Life was simple and restricted. There were few cities. People lived in the country or in villages or small towns. There was a well-defined rural social life. As the country became more prosperous, large cities grew up, offering an increasing number of diversions and forms of recreation. The country people were gradually drawn to the cities for their amusement. Rural social life gradually declined. In recent years, however, rural people have realized the distinct loss which they sustained when they were drawn from their normal social activities to the more artificial amusements of the cities. At the same time

there has been a marked revival of the spirit of cooperation, and now, all over the country, farm communities are organizing for economic, social, political, religious, educational, and hygienic purposes. As a result, "meeting round" from house to house and from place to place for community purposes does not suffice. A community home is wanted. The result is the community or "common" house.

### GROWING INTEREST IN COMMUNITY BUILDINGS.

The community building as a distinct institution has arrived. So keen and widespread is the interest in such buildings and their activities that a comprehensive study of a number of representative buildings was deemed desirable by the United States Department of Agriculture. Accordingly, a study has been made of 256 such buildings, most of them relatively new, 248 having been built since 1900, 201 since 1910, and 90 since 1915.

Of the total number of buildings studied, 201 are in places of 2,500 inhabitants or fewer, 83 being in the open country, and 55 are in towns or small cities having a population of more than 2,500. Twenty-five are school community buildings and 29 are church community buildings, 20 of the latter being in buildings separate from the church. Nine are farmers' fraternal society buildings and 8 are library and community buildings.

The 83 buildings in the open country are controlled or dominated by the people of the farming communities. Most of these are the homes of farmers' clubs of various natures. Since these clubs are open to all and democratic in government, and since their membership includes, as a rule, nearly every family in the neighborhood, they are in fact real community buildings. In these buildings, not only the farmers' clubs have their meetings, but the various organizations and social activities of the community center there. These farmers' clubs vary in nature, some of them being social, some educational, some economic, some religious, while many carry out a general program.

In the brief time since this study was made there has been a great increase in the movement for the erection of community buildings, until at the present time (1922) there are in the United States more than double the number included in this study.

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NOTE.—Farmers' Bulletin 1192, "Organization of Rural Community Buildings," gives information regarding preliminary steps to be taken when the building of a community house is contemplated, cites State laws bearing on community buildings, and presents examples of constitutions and by-laws for community organizations. Farmers' Bulletin 1173, "Plans of Rural Community Buildings," describes and illustrates various types of community buildings now in use and gives the floor plans.

## STANDARD TYPES OF BUILDINGS AND THEIR USES.

According to number and character of rooms community buildings may be grouped roughly into three classes, namely, the minimum type, the medium type, and the maximum type. The following outline sets forth briefly the features that may be found in these different types of buildings, and the activities connected with them:

### MINIMUM TYPE.

Auditorium with stage and dressing rooms, dining room, kitchen, playground.

**Economic activities.**—Agricultural society meetings, farm demonstrations, cooperative purchasing and marketing, fairs, canning demonstrations, boys' and girls' club work.

**Educational and recreational.**—Lectures, entertainments, musicales, community sings, local plays, table games, debates, spelling bees, annual celebrations, baseball.

**Social.**—Club meetings, socials, parties, dancing, lunches, suppers, ice cream socials.

**Political.**—Caucuses, elections, etc.

**Hygienic.**—Visiting nurse.

**Religious.**—Union church and Sunday school, church auxiliaries.

### MEDIUM TYPE.

Auditorium with stage and dressing rooms, dining room, kitchen, library, women's rest room, committee room, playground.

**Economic activities.**—Farmers' institute, farm demonstrations, cooperative purchasing and marketing, fairs, canning and cooking demonstrations, boys' and girls' club work, domestic science.

**Educational and recreational.**—Stereopticon views, musicales, lectures, entertainments, community sings, local plays, table games, debates, annual celebration, basket ball, other gymnasium activities, tennis, volley ball, baseball, library, women's rest room.

**Social.**—Club meetings, social parties, dancing, banquets, suppers, luncheons.

**Political.**—Rallies, political meetings, conventions, caucuses, elections.

**Religious.**—Union church and Sunday school, church auxiliaries, revival.

**Hygienic.**—Nursery, visiting nurse clinic.

**Committee room activities.**—Small meetings of various kinds.

### MAXIMUM TYPE.

Auditorium with stage and dressing rooms, dining room, kitchen, library, women's rest room, committee room, game room, gymnasium, playground, one or more special rooms (municipal offices, health room, bowling room, clubrooms, swimming pool, showers, war veterans' room, farm bureau room, chamber of commerce room, Red Cross or charities room, museum, stock sales pavilion, cooperative room, art room, music room, lodge room).

**Economic activities.**—Cooperative purchasing and marketing, farmers' short courses, farmers' institutes, farm demonstrations, home economics, boys' and

girls' club work, canning and cooking demonstrations, food sales, womens' exchange, fairs and exhibits, bazaars, sewing bees, flower shows, free employment bureaus, county agent work, home demonstration agent work, chamber of commerce meetings.

**Educational and recreational.**—Motion pictures, community sings, conventions, homecomings, annual celebrations, Chautauquas, traveling theatrical, operas, local plays, lecture courses, Americanization classes, musicales, local entertainments, open forums, night schools, exhibits of local paintings and sculpture and of traveling art collections, chamber music, billiards, smokers, table games, card parties, athletic meets, volley ball, basket ball, indoor baseball, drills, setting-up exercises, track and field meets, tennis, bowling, swimming pool, showers.

**Political.**—Party conventions, rallies, elections, caucuses, activities of local municipal government.

**Religious.**—Union church and Sunday school, church conventions, church auxiliaries, revivals.

**Social.**—Banquets, suppers, lunches, teas, dancing, pageants, club meeting, meetings of fraternal societies.

**Hygienic.**—Clinics, visiting nurse, welfare work, nursery, Red Cross work, home nursing force, first aid.

**Committee room activities.**—Meetings of small organizations and of various committees of larger organizations.

#### FEATURE ACTIVITIES OF EXISTING BUILDINGS STUDIED.

Below are cited a few of the buildings studied where certain activities, among many others, have had special prominence:

**Economic.**—The McKinley Farmers' Club, Kensal, N. Dak., uses its building as a basis for cooperative purchases of wood, coal, posts, lumber, twine, machinery, feed, etc. The Northfield, Minn., community building houses the Holstein Association. The clubhouse at Tupelo, Miss., is largely given over to boys' and girls' club work, as is the community house at Perry, Tex., the township building at Como, Wis., and the building at Albemarle, N. C., and Carrollton, Va., to a lesser degree. Russell, Kans., Perry, Tex., and Bloomfield, Wis., are noted for their community fairs. Winnetka, Ill., has its annual horticultural exhibit; Purchase, N. Y., its poultry show, and Rossville, Ind., and Roslyn, N. Y., their flower shows; and Rossville, Ind., its corn show. The buildings at Logan, and Farmington, Iowa, are much used for farm stock sales. Purchase, N. Y., fosters children's gardens. Farm demonstrations and illustrated lectures by the county agents are featured in many buildings, such as that of Sooner, Okla., the Progressive Farmers' Club Building, Sheridan County, Mont., and the buildings at Glentana, Mont., and in Linn Township, Wis. The county farm bureaus are housed in the buildings at Wheaton, Minn., Salisbury, N. C., and Butler, and Washington, Pa. The farmers' short course or the farmers' institute is the feature activity at Logan, Iowa, Coldwater, Kans., Dexter, Iowa, and Centerville, Mich. Special classes in home economics are maintained at La Jolla, Calif., Larkin, Fla., and Seal Harbor, Me. (Fig. 1.) Free employment bureaus are found at Green Bay, Wis., Hoosick Falls, N. Y., and Mount George, Calif. Bazaars and sales are featured at Manhattan, Kans., and Steuben, Me. Wheaton, Minn., maintains an agricultural museum. The carpenters' union uses the Midland, Mich., building. Many buildings provide exhibits of various kinds, as the needle-craft at Roslyn, N. Y., and the home-products exhibit at Washington, Pa. Mount George, Calif., has its bureau of information, West Union, Tenn., its flower exchange, its

weaving class, and waste paper sales, and Loda, Ill., its seed-testing experiments. The Garfield, Oreg., building has furnished a meeting place for the local cooperative marketing association. Washington, Pa., has in the rear of its building a farmers' hitching yard large enough for 50 teams. Minnewashta, Minn., gives special exhibits of agricultural lantern slides, while one of the chief reasons for establishing the community play house at Centerville, Mich., was to provide a place for showing pictures stimulating agriculture. Purchase, N. Y., features a special roadside market. La Jolla, Calif., has a manual training school, while Saxon Mills, S. C., supports special classes in sewing and cooking. The community building has frequently come to the aid of the public schools as at New Foundland, Pa., and Holden, Mass., where well equipped kitchens are used by the school cooking classes.

**Educational and recreational.**—Under these headings are found the activities for which community houses are most generally used. People gather en masse for community "sings," as at West Union, Tenn., the community stadium at



FIG. 1.—Home economics class in a community building.

Anoka, Minn., and at Somerton, Ariz. Choral societies are organized as at Glen Cove, N. Y., La Jolla, Calif., and La Porte, Ind. Frederick, Okla., has its community singing convention, while Winnetka, Ill., and Roslyn, N. Y., have their choruses.

Notable success with motion pictures has been attained at Bethel, Conn., Brimfield, Ill., Wesley Chapel, Center, N. Y., Sand Lake, Minn., and St. Croix Falls, Wis. The village of Advance, Ind., with its modern auditorium, gives its lyceum course under most favorable auspices. Among others to maintain such courses are Potwin, Kans., Milton, N. Y., Longacre, La., and Kenilworth, Ill. Fairfield, Mont., and Midland, Mich., have their community Chautauquas. Norwood, Mass., and Roslyn, N. Y., have public forums. Bogalusa, La., and St. Albans, Vt., have their night schools, while Saxon Mills, S. C., maintains a day school, and Norwood, Mass., and Roslyn, N. Y., Americanization classes. (Fig. 2.) The members of the farming community in the Crawford district, near Atlanta, Mo., built by voluntary subscription their own agricultural high-school and community house, after the vote for consolidation of four districts had twice proved negative. West Union, Tenn., maintains its book and magazine exchange. Community houses have proved a great help to



schools in providing suitable auditoriums where their entertainments might be staged. The Purchase, N. Y., building provides living quarters for the school mistress.

The people of the small rural town of Richland Center, Wis., voted to tax themselves \$50,000 for the erection of their town hall and community house. Of its many important features none is more important than its municipal theater, with its 850 opera chairs and its large, thoroughly equipped concrete stage, where the people of this rural community have the privilege of attending theatrical and musical entertainments of national reputation. Here we find municipal control of the commercial theater at its best. The little country theater movement, inaugurated at the North Dakota School of Agriculture, hav-



FIG. 2.—An Americanization class. Many community houses now have such classes.

ing for its object the encouragement of rural dramatics, is well exemplified by local talent on the stage of the McKinley Farmers' Club, Kensal, N. Dak. La Jolla, Calif., operates its Peoples Theater Company. The Township hall at St. Helens, Mich., furnishes roller skating as one of its forms of recreation.

Community pageants, illustrating important facts of local history, often find their settings around community houses. Notable among these was the pageant of Palos Park, Ill. Anoka, Minn., and Kentfield, Calif. (Fig. 3), have also specialized in this delightful form of entertainment. The large community auditorium at Frederick, Okla., was erected chiefly for the purpose of housing large conventions and community gatherings. One of its major activities was the celebration of "community week."

**Political.**—Twenty of the buildings studied were financed by a town or township. Political parties feel free to use them for caucuses, conventions, and rallies. Most of the other buildings, being of a community nature, are used for similar purposes. Buildings especially adapted for such purposes are at Ironton, Minn., Fairfield, Wis., Fayville, Mass., and Chateaugay, N. Y. Among

the various special uses may be mentioned the women's voting class at Midland, Mich.

**Religious.**—Community buildings have served the cause of religion in many ways. In sparsely settled communities and in those where different denominations are not financially able to erect their own homes, the community building has served, as at Pelham, Mass., and Orchard Homes, Mont. Often the result is a union church and community building, as at Scotts, Ark., and Sooner, Okla. Frequently the church finances a community house. A few years ago the people of the farming community of Ashland, Mo., erected, by voluntary subscription and free labor, a combined church, school, and community building.



FIG. 3.—Annual May-day fête at Tamalpais Centre, Kentfield, Calif., at which the young people gather on the 29-acre playground for contests in Maypole and folk dancing, marching, drilling, athletics, declamation, amateur dramatics, etc.

One of the primary reasons for the erection of neighborhood house in the Roosevelt District, Ariz., was to serve as a place for the union Sunday school to meet. Coldwater, Kans., and Frederick, Okla., each erected a building largely for union revival meetings; Russell, Kans., one for Sunday school conventions; New Market, Ind., one for evangelical meetings; Butler, Pa., houses the Gospel mission, and Burke, Wis., the parochial school. As with schools, so with churches, nearly every building is used for auxiliary meetings, entertainments, banquets, and suppers.

**Social.**—Community houses have done much to elevate the tone of dancing in rural communities. The chief consideration in erecting the Timpanogas, Utah, building was the anxiety of the parents over the fact that the young people were going to a questionable neighboring resort for dancing and other amusements. After their building was completed dancing became largely a family affair, with parents and children alike attending. In the buildings

where dancing is permitted the activity is largely taking the nature of community dancing. The farming community of Mount George, Calif., helped to pay for its building with its community dances. At the Meredith Neck, N. H., farmers' club building this is also a major activity. Among others, Purchase, N. Y., features folk dancing. Many buildings provide a room where billiards and table games may be played in a wholesome environment. The small community at Pelham, Mass., has its whist club.

No community building is complete without its kitchen and place to dine, and the gathering together of the people for this form of social enjoyment not only fosters a wholesome community spirit, but also furnishes a large part of the funds required to maintain the buildings. The highest form of this activity is the community affair, such as the "spread" at Frederick, Okla., where the



FIG. 4.—The Roslyn (N. Y.) Neighborhood Association has a garbage truck and disposes of the town garbage.

farmers and village folk bring their basket lunches, the annual barbecues at the same place, or the community banquets which united the Elgin, Nebr., community. The father-and-son and the mother-and-daughter banquets have, perhaps, seen their highest development at Locust Valley, N. Y. Midland, Mich., is obliged to use its large gymnasium for its banquets.

**Hygienic.**—The increasing attention to hygienic and sanitary conditions is exemplified by the Roslyn, N. Y., building, where movements to improve living conditions are promoted. Fly, mosquito, and clean-up campaigns are inaugurated; health information through demonstrations imparted; welfare work conducted. This work includes the collection and disposal of municipal garbage by a special garbage motor truck furnished and housed by the community association, which, by fees collected, supports itself (Fig. 4); a home-nursing course, furnishing headquarters for the nurse, including office, consulting room, operating room with equipment for minor operations, and a class in dietetics.



FIG. 5.—Children at play on a community house playground.

Laporte, Ind., has its day nursery; Peabody, Mass., its welfare work for babies; and Purchase, N. Y., also furnishes a garage for the car of the visiting nurse.

**Athletic.**—There is scarcely a community building without a gymnasium, or at least improvised equipment, and in some cases outdoor playgrounds are provided. (Figs. 5 and 6). An example of what may be done in this line is found at Midland, Mich. (Fig. 7.) There "gym" classes are held daily under competent directors for men, women, and children in the spacious, well-equipped gymnasium; a twilight basket-ball league has been organized; volley ball and indoor baseball tournaments are carried on; tennis matches are featured; indoor skating facilities made available; track contests held on the indoor running track; and an annual play festival has been inaugurated, in which town



FIG. 6.—Procession of Maypole dancers on a community house playground.

and country people mingle in friendly contests. A town athletic association has been formed, with its headquarters in the building. Lebanon, Ohio, and Lebanon, N. H., also lead in athletics.

The McKinley Farmers' Club has its base ball team. Eveleth, Minn., floods its roller-skating room for ice skating. Potlatch, Idaho, and Ware Shoals, S. C., have recreation buildings. Glen Cove, N. Y., Elgin, Nebr., and Glastonbury, Conn., are among those that have unusual bowling facilities, while Reed City, Mich., is in an intertown bowling league.

A few buildings, as the one at Marysville, Kan., have indoor swimming pools. The prime inducement which caused the people of Coldwater, Kans., to join in financing their building was the desire to have an adequate place for school, community, and intertown basket-ball contests.

**Special features.**—Towns and villages are beginning to recognize their obligations to agriculture. One way in which this is done is the furnishing of rest rooms for the farmers' family when it comes in to trade. The Farmers' Club

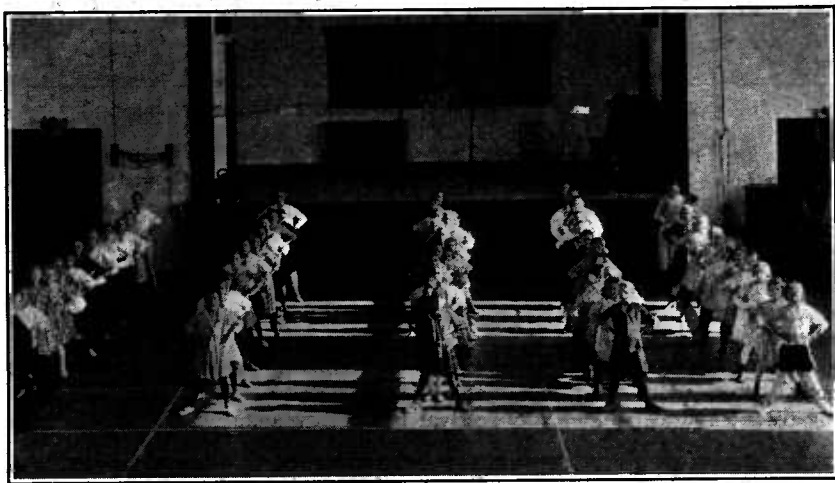


FIG. 7.—The girls' gymnasium class in the Midland, Mich., community building.

building at Seymour, Ind., is exclusively for the use of farmers and their families. Many community buildings have included these rooms in their plans, notably Blue Lake, Calif., Mocksville, N. C., Washington and Butler, Pa., and Redwood Falls, Minn. Shower baths are given prominence at Iron-ton, Minn., Owego, N. Y., and Oconto, Wis. In the extension of the traveling library into the rural districts, community buildings have been of especial use. Most of them have at least a magazine table with a few books and periodicals. Buildings that have given especial prominence to libraries are those of McLean, Ill., Steuben, Me., Bolton, Conn., and Scituate, Mass. Washington, Pa., Green Bay, Wis., and Laporte, Ind., have cafeterias in their buildings for the especial convenience of the people. Roslyn, N. Y., established a school lunch for children and a dining table for the special service of school teachers.

Some buildings are extensively used by lodges and fraternal societies on the payment of a moderate rental fee. The building at Scottsville, Mich., a village of 900 population, houses the Grange, Gleaners, Odd Fellows, and Masons, besides such organizations as the Farmers' Club and the Business Men's Club. All organizations assisted the municipality in financing the

building. At Saxon Mills, S. C., the building has a special lodge room with 6 paraphernalia rooms for different fraternal societies. The Konnarock, Va., building is much used for similar purposes. Albuquerque, N. Mex., Rochester, Minn., Oakdale, La., and Washington and Butler, Pa., provide comfortable quarters for the commercial club, while in a number of buildings the county agricultural agents have their offices, notably Huntington, Pa., Washington, Pa., and Wheaton, Minn.

Only those who have lived in the open country and tried to hold their meetings in farm houses, in the one-room school house, or the country church, or who must make the long trip to the neighboring town hall for such pur-



Fig. 8.—The Red Cross has its headquarters in the community building at Roslyn, N. Y.

poses, can measure the value of a community building, say the people of the village of Roslyn, N. Y., where the community house is the home of the Red Cross (Fig. 8), Boy Scouts, Girl Pioneers, home bureau, home economics class, baseball club, basket-ball club, district nursing association, women's council, dancing class, school lunch association, Italian society, American Legion (Fig. 9), open forum, and library association. Thus, the assurance of a satisfactory permanent meeting place, with committee rooms and a convenient kitchen for after-meeting lunches, stimulates the initiation of many worthy movements for public and for private welfare. Another community building that is noteworthy in this regard is in the open country near Perry, S. Dak., where the Prairie Agricultural Association, the boys' club, the domestic science class, the community fair association, the woman's club, the community band, the baseball club, and other organizations find their community home.

### REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY BUILDING ACTIVITIES.

Below are presented brief descriptions of the use of typical community buildings. These buildings have been chosen with a view to showing examples of community buildings constructed or acquired under a variety of conditions and serving different types of communities.

#### FARMING COMMUNITY—BUILDING WITH COUNTY AGENT FEATURE.

When people go from different parts of the country to make their homes in a new and somewhat virgin field, they feel at once the need of a common tie. Such was the case with the people of Valrico,



FIG. 9.—The community building has become the headquarters of organizations of ex-service men.

Fla. Many of them, having left their places of residence in various parts of the North and West, had come to this sparsely settled region of the South to establish their homes and make their living from the soil. Church, school, and fraternal ties of long standing had been severed. They were strangers to each other. Even the future occupation of many of them, that of fruit raising, was new to them. New social, religious, fraternal, and economic ties had not as yet been formed.

While various church denominations and fraternal organizations were represented in the community, there were scarcely enough members of any one society to form a local organization. As in most newly settled communities, the houses were small. There was no place for the people to gather, and, of course, they were lonesome and wanted to get together. They felt the social need of meeting and communing with their kind. Accustomed, in their former homes,

to giving vent to their fraternal and humanitarian instincts by associating in bodies in order more adequately to work for the public good, they felt the need of associating themselves for similar aims in the new locality. The men, in taking up an untried occupation, needed the services of the county agricultural agent, and the women needed the help of the demonstration agent in learning the new processes of canning and preserving fruit and in making chicken raising a paying business. What more natural, then, that they should form an improvement association and build for themselves a community home?

The building, completed in 1915, is of light brick, two stories high, and 50 by 80 feet. In it are found a lobby, women's rest room,

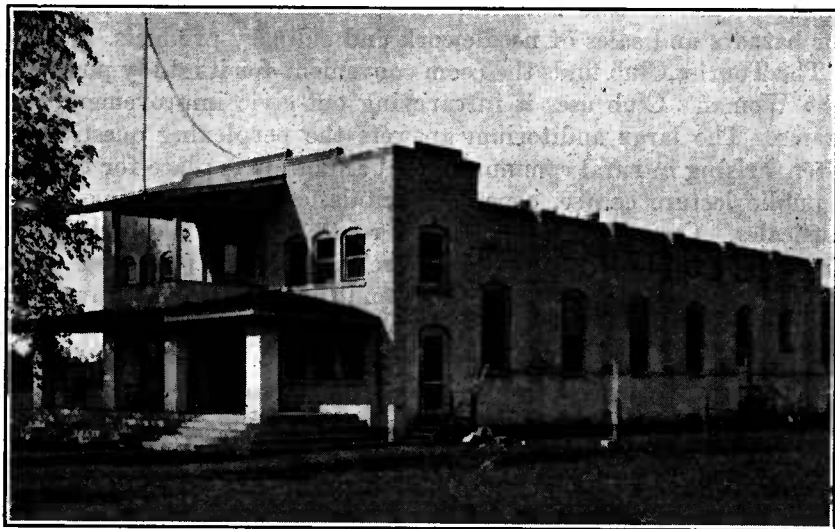


FIG. 10.—Community building at Valrico, Fla.

kitchen, assembly hall, stage, dressing room, two community rooms, and motion-picture booth (Fig. 10).

On the building and equipment \$4,280 was expended, raised by the sale of stock, from dues and from receipts from bazaars. Voluntary labor was used to a considerable extent. Annual maintenance expenses of \$220 are covered by annual dues and receipts from entertainments. The plant is the property of the improvement association and is managed by an elected executive committee.

**Uses of building.**—Perhaps the greatest service of this building to the community is the use made of it by the county agricultural agent and the county demonstration agent. As a great many of the farmers had come from distant States and were not accustomed to their new occupation there, that of fruit raising, or had engaged in it under different climatic conditions, and as the women were not acquainted with the latest methods of canning and preserving fruit,



raising poultry, etc., the aid of the county agents became of prime importance. The agents frequently meet the farmers in the building, the agricultural agent giving up-to-date information on fruit culture, advising how to care for the trees, etc., the demonstration agent presenting the latest methods for preserving new citrus fruits, how to care for chickens in a warm climate, and other necessary information. The best packing and marketing information is given, advice and information being generally illustrated by lantern slides.

The county farm bureau, which was organized in the community building, meets there in carrying out its enlarged producing and marketing program. The county board of trade, also organized there, uses the community room in activities connected with town and country cooperation. The women of the community often use the room for bazaars and sales of needlework and culinary products.

The Tourist Club finds the room convenient for its study purposes. The Woman's Club uses it in carrying out civic improvement programs. The large auditorium answers the perplexing question, so often arising in rural communities, of an adequate place for holding a public lecture course, concerts, recitals, community "sings," and musicales. One particularly notable result has been along dramatic lines. The local talent plays, minstrel shows, etc., produced under adequate stage and dressing-room conditions, became so favorably known that the woman in charge of this work was invited to do similar work in neighboring cities.

Perhaps the greatest get-together affairs of the community are the annual celebrations. In a strange region, remembering their home celebrations of annual holidays, they naturally gravitate together in fraternal enjoyment on these occasions. Other methods of getting acquainted and forming social ties are the community dances in which the entire family is generally the unit.

Rather than form a number of weak denominational churches with several buildings, it was decided to form a union church and a union Sunday school and meet in the community house until the congregation was financially able to erect a church building.

Red Cross work rooms are in the building and its humanitarian work centers here. Demonstrations in sanitation and first aid also are given. A central place is available for the visiting nurse. The improvement society originates its clean-up campaigns here.

Candidates for office use this building for speaking purposes.

The well-equipped kitchen is especially convenient for the home demonstration agent in her preserving and cooking demonstrations. The literary part of the annual celebrations is generally followed by an old-fashioned "spread" in the dining room.

**Results.**—What are the results of six years of use of this building? The secretary writes:

Practically every meeting or entertainment held in Valrico since the erection of the building has been held in it. Owing to our rural situation we could ill afford to lose it. Its effect upon the morale of our citizenship is very beneficial. We are proud of the building and what it has meant to the development of this young community and feel that what we have done others can do with equal success.

**FARMING COMMUNITY—FARMERS' CLUB FEATURE.**

In the far northwest corner of Minnesota, in Kittson County, near the Canadian line, is a community of farmers who, in the early days, emigrated to this virgin country from various parts of America and

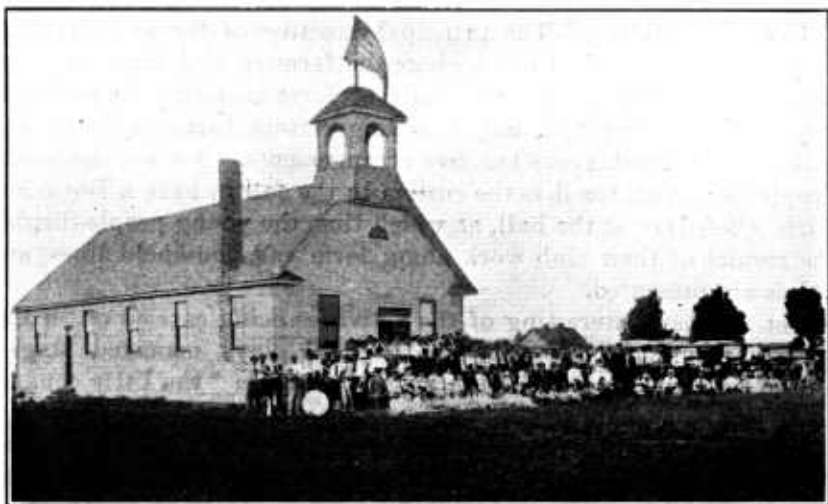


FIG. 11.—Red River Farmers' Club Hall, Kittson County, Minn.

the Old World to pioneer a home in the wilderness. Poor in this world's goods, but of sturdy stock and ambitious for the future, for a generation their one aim was to overcome the difficulties of pioneer life on the prairie and establish a home for themselves and their children. Enduring such hardships, little time was left for the higher aspirations of life. The scene is now changed. The barren prairies of the fathers have become fertile fields and have provided well-filled granaries for the children, who, relieved of the stern necessities of mere bodily existence, find time to satisfy the longings of the soul.

As a symbol of the new order we have the Red River Farmers' Club Hall, which provides not only a place where the farmers' club may initiate propaganda for better farms, schools, and homes, but,

as a member expressed it, "a real 'little country theater,' one in which plain, common, everyday farm folks may display their musical and dramatic talents."

In 1917 the building was completed, a simple structure, arranged for service rather than beauty, and financed by means of \$500 raised through picnics and socials, \$1,500 contributed (from practically every one in the neighborhood), and \$500 representing voluntary labor. (Fig. 11.)

Besides the auditorium, with stage, furnished with opera chairs and piano, there is a woman's rest room and kitchen.

The building is maintained through membership fees and proceeds from socials and picnics, and is controlled by the club through an elected board of trustees.

**Uses of building.**—The principal function of the auditorium is to serve as a convenient place where the farmers' club may carry out its prepared program for the study of farm economy, cooperate in buying certain supplies and in selling certain farm products, and make other advantageous business arrangements. Nor are the young people neglected, for it is the custom in the fall to have a Boys' and Girls' Club Day at the hall, at which time the young people display the results of their club work along farm and household lines, and prizes are presented.

Not the least interesting of the activities being carried on in this strictly farming community are the local plays, managed, staged, and acted by the people of the neighborhood in "the little country theater."

A community orchestra, a community band, and a choir have been formed, and not only find the hall a convenient place for practice, but also, at intervals, give carefully prepared musical programs of merit.

As the membership of the farmers' club is by families, including women and children, the rest room becomes a special convenience. Children, and the elder members of the families not caring for the literary or economic program, find here a comfortable place to rest.

**Results.**—Has this building a reason for existence? Does it accomplish its purpose? Are these farming people satisfied with the results of their effort?

In a recent letter the county agricultural agent writes: "The Red River Farmers' Club is still very active. The hall is being put to good use; in fact, it is a real community hall."

The secretary of the club writes:

Through the community hall the social, religious, and economic life of this community has been brought into closer relationship, since the building serves not only as the regular meeting place of the farmers' club, but such organizations as the orchestra, choir, and band, and different church societies find it

an ideal assembling place. The district school also uses it occasionally for its various entertainments. It fulfills all the requirements of a social center and in many ways exerts a helpful influence upon every line of community activity.

#### **FARMING AND VILLAGE COMMUNITY—STOCK SHOW FEATURE.**

The Dixon Township Building, Argonia, Kans., is worthy of note as being an attempt to unite the interests and aspirations of the farming communities with those of the trading center, with the township as the unit, through a common building.

The erection of such a building was recently legalized by a special act of the State legislature permitting townships to vote bonds to the amount of \$5,000 for this purpose. In compliance with the provisions of the new law a petition was placed before the township board, signed by 25 per cent of the voters, requesting that the bond question be submitted to vote. As a result, a building was erected in 1916 by the township board, at a cost of \$6,809, including \$1,809 from general funds.

In addition to rooms for township officials and the library of 600 volumes is the auditorium, 70 by 50 feet, with 600 opera chairs, at the back of which is a balcony that will seat 175 people. In front is a large stage, with dressing rooms, 5 drop curtains, 1 moving-picture curtain, and 6 wing curtains.

Between the chairs and the stage is a concrete floor, 15 feet wide, running across the building, with large double doors at each end. During fairs and stock shows the animals are brought into the building through these doors, there to be examined and judged before the public.

The building is managed by township officials, is maintained through nominal rentals, and serves a population of 950 people, about equally divided between rural and urban.

**Uses of building.**—In the auditorium the farmers gather for agricultural extension work and to discuss their problems. Here the extension force of the State Agricultural College gives an annual farmers' short course of one week's duration. The farm bureau uses this room whenever meetings are scheduled for Argonia. There is also a farmers' institute of five days, one of the most valuable features of which is stock judging on the concrete floor. The facilities for stock judging are also available for stock sales and for exhibits of pure-bred stock. In such cases a dry and comfortable market place tends to attract more buyers. The promoters of community fairs and farm and school exhibits find here a favorable place for display, and the Farmers' Educational and Cooperative Union meets here to carry on its social and economic program.

The community lecture course, with speakers and artists of national reputation, is made possible by this spacious auditorium with

its comfortable chairs and modern stage. For the same reason the community has the opportunity of viewing a higher class of traveling shows than the ordinary village of this size. The local amateur theatrical company is also enabled to work to better advantage.

The high school uses the auditorium for its class plays and amateur dramatics, and the local glee club uses it for its musical entertainments. Not the least important use to which the auditorium is put is that of the production of pageants based on episodes in local history, produced under the direction of the dramatic department of the State Agricultural College. Recently a motion-picture machine was purchased with the receipts from the community pictures shown two nights each week. A nominal admission fee is charged to defray expenses, while the surplus goes to build up the public library in the building and for other community betterment. The various town, school, church, and farmers' clubs find a convenient place for their social meetings.

The various churches unite in the winter for a series of union revival meetings and a community Christmas entertainment in the auditorium. This cheerful auditorium, in which all citizens have a natural interest through ownership, makes this possible.

The library association, through agitation and cooperation, had a large share in the construction of the building, and for the nominal sum of \$1 it was given a perpetual lease of one room. It has found a comfortable and convenient place where it may carry out its service to the public.

Since the building was constructed through taxation, it affords an official place for holding caucuses, primaries, and elections. Political conventions and rallies also are accommodated. The municipal functions of the township are centered in a separate room. Here the township fathers meet to carry on the work of local government. Thus, instead of in a farmhouse or an old out-of-date rented building in an obscure part of the town, as is frequently the case in the small village, the people are enabled to transact their public business in their own building.<sup>1</sup>

#### FARMING AND VILLAGE COMMUNITY—FIRE DEPARTMENT FEATURE.

About eight years ago a boy came to the secretary of the Matinecock Neighborhood Association of Locust Valley, N. Y., and asked him to start a boys' club, saying that there was no place for boys to go for a good time except to the saloons or to the neighboring town, with its questionable amusements.

The secretary made a survey of the situation and found that neighborhood spirit was at a low ebb. He found, also, that there

<sup>1</sup> An exterior view and floor plans of this building and of those at Locust Valley, N. Y., Brimfield, Ill., Northfield, Minn., and Winnetka, Ill., treated later, are given in *Farmers' Bulletin 1173*.

was in the village a young men's athletic club which met in a blacksmith's shop. He persuaded this club to come into the neighborhood association as a recreation department to provide recreation for the whole community. The association appointed an executive committee to have charge, including a timber dealer, a barber, three carpenters, and a clergyman. Twenty-nine boys were appointed on subcommittees. This gave them a feeling of importance and something constructive to do.

Temporary quarters were found in an old barn, which was fitted up through general contributions, including a phonograph, piano, pool table, stoves, dishes, an indoor baseball outfit, \$137 in cash, and subscriptions for many magazines. Boy Scouts, a band, and other organizations were soon formed.

As a result, it was soon found that 148 young men were governing themselves, financing their own enterprise, and furnishing suppers, dances, euchres, and athletic entertainments to their fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters. At the same time they were members of the neighborhood association, with votes on all questions.

The barn soon became too small for the young men and, as the neighborhood association was in need of a home, it decided to erect one through the aid of general voluntary contributions, and thus provide not only a meeting place for the young men but also one for the community at large. Meanwhile community spirit and local pride had become aroused, and 90 per cent of the families in the village gave money, while voluntary labor was contributed to the value of \$1,500, every family being represented in the building either by money or by labor. A clubhouse costing \$32,000 was built. All work was done by local people, every piece of timber and iron used being fabricated in the village.

The building is architecturally attractive and provides an auditorium which seats 500 people, a stage, social room, motion-picture booth, a room for the village fire department, two rooms for the caretaker, five baths, lavatories, four bowling alleys, pool tables, and a player piano, and is furnished with stoves, kitchen utensils, and ordinary furniture.

It is in constant use, the attendance being over 800 per week, and is practically self-supporting. The annual budget of \$4,000 is met from receipts and dues.

**Uses of building.**—The ladies' aid society of the church frequently holds apron and cake sales in the auditorium. Rummage sales are given by different organizations for the benefit of the library. A free employment service is in operation. The Red Cross has its work room here, which was the headquarters for all war drives.

Motion pictures have been given by the association twice a week for several years. These not only furnish a good form of amusement,

but provide a share of the revenues needed to run the building. The total attendance at the motion-picture shows from September 11, 1920, to June 1, 1921, was 10,316.

An older boys' conference and an older girls' conference are held annually, with an attendance for each at times of over 250. The county social workers have their annual conference in the building. A series of "community assemblies," about 10 in number, are yearly featured, including community sings, lectures, and addresses by prominent people. More than 2,000 people attended the entertainments during 1921. The academy gives an annual cantata and an annual play, while the choral club of the association gives yearly a series of concert and dramatic entertainments. The Polish-English class holds its sessions here.

The auditorium is frequently in use by the public schools for their entertainments, public receptions, and graduating exercises. The annual county Boy Scout rally takes place here, and community sings, under a community leader. A community minstrel show is a regular event. A series of success talks by men of national reputation were greatly enjoyed, while the moving-picture dramas are often followed by travelogues. Local amateurs have formed themselves into a dramatic society and give several performances yearly. All farmers' meetings are held in the auditorium.

Regulated and supervised community dancing has been highly developed. (Fig. 12.) Classes have been organized for the children and for the older people. The entertainment committee has been responsible for about 10 community dances and as many socials each year. Besides these the auditorium is used for the dances of various private organizations. On Hallowe'en and Christmas the room is used for various social celebrations. The annual father-and-son dinner, the mother-and-daughter dinner, the firemen's dinner, and various church and school suppers are notable occasions. On election day the auditorium is in constant use. It is also used for political rallies and drills of the home defense society.

The village nurse, maintained by the association in cooperation with the public schools, uses the auditorium for a clinic. It is also the center of the baby welfare work. The fire department uses it in which to practice.

Regular church and Sunday-school services are often held in the auditorium, as are also the community Thanksgiving and Christmas services, besides various church receptions and meetings.

With the chairs removed the auditorium becomes the place for the annual girls' indoor athletic meet. One of the most successful events of recent years was the art exhibit, which continued for eight days.

The social room is a general, informal meeting place and a center for the gathering of small organizations.

In 1914 the Locust Valley Hook and Ladder Company petitioned the association to be admitted as one of its departments. This was unanimously granted, association directors were appointed, and a large ground-floor room set aside in which to store the fire-fighting apparatus. The association took subscriptions for a new engine and assisted financially in other ways until the village was able to take over this support.

The bowling alleys have proved one of the most popular features of the building.

The annual community fair, with its agricultural exhibit, is an event of great interest to the farmers, as is also the annual poultry



FIG. 12.—A group of children at the Locust Valley (N. Y.) Neighborhood House, dancing under supervision.

show. Flower lovers show their horticultural ability at the annual dahlia show. The tennis courts are reported to be in greater use at the present time than ever before.

In addition to the activities housed by the building, the association has initiated and carried out a large number of notable public improvements throughout the village.

**Results.**—Has the use of this building proved its worth? As to this, the 1920 president says:

Our association is now 10 years old and has demonstrated that it is a success without any question of doubt. We need only pause a moment to realize what a lot of real comfort and pleasure it has given to us all, and that without this wonderful clubhouse we would indeed be very unhappy.



**FARMING AND VILLAGE COMMUNITY—WAR MEMORIAL FEATURE.**

The population of the town of Brimfield, Ill., is about 700, but the population of the community of Brimfield is some 2,000. The line of demarcation between town and country is being obliterated. This has been brought about through the union of town and country people in working together to build the new community building and through their common use of it after completion.

For a number of years certain leaders of this community had preached the doctrine of town and country cooperation. Gradually the people became imbued with this idea until they felt the need of a community center, to include not only the town people, but the people of the surrounding country who used the town as their market. The automobile also had a bearing upon the changed conditions. Distances had become shortened. The boys and girls of the village and country were going to the larger towns, where the amusements were unsupervised and sometimes questionable. The leading people of Brimfield saw the necessity of making their social life so attractive that the young people from the village and surrounding farming community would be satisfied to come there for their amusement. Furthermore, the soldiers were returning from the war and it was desired that a suitable memorial be erected in their honor.

A stock company (The Brimfield Community Co.) was formed and incorporated with a capital stock value of \$10,000, later increased to \$20,000. Shares were \$25 and each person was limited to 10 shares. More than 600 shares were sold to 265 stockholders, about half of whom were farmers, 1 to 4 shares being sold to each stockholder. The building was financed as follows:

Stock sold.....	\$16, 750
Sale of old building on purchased land.....	1, 000
Loan at 6 per cent.....	10, 000
Opening bazaar.....	2, 700
Total .....	30, 450

For the present, all organizations with a set membership, except the American Legion, pay some rental, churches and charitable organizations at reduced rates. General organizations working for the public good use the building free.

The Brimfield community vests control of the building in a board of seven trustees, two of whom are farmers, elected by the stockholders.

The building is of one story, with a high basement. The latter includes a dining hall with concrete floor; kitchen furnished with cupboards, sink, and stove; serving room; two locker rooms; two toilets; two shower baths; two furnace rooms; two coal rooms; four

closets, one with pneumatic pressure tank for water supply and electric pump; and bowling alleys. On the main floor is an auditorium 71 by 56 feet, with seating capacity for 800, stage 26 by 26 feet; two dressing rooms, each with lavatories and hot and cold water; balcony at rear and extending three-fourths of each side, seating capacity 400, making a total seating capacity of 1,200; club room in front 36 by 22 feet; committee room 21 by 12 feet, with ticket window.

The following detailed financial statements as to cost of the Brimfield building and its maintenance may be of interest in this connection:

COST.		
Site, 2 lots.....		\$650. 00
Cost of building to July 31, 1920:		
Excavating.....	\$372. 10	
Building contract.....	19, 447. 40	
Cement.....	668. 43	
Painting.....	726. 25	
Architect.....	592. 50	
Wire and wiring.....	795. 08	
Plumbing.....	1, 793. 07	
Hardware.....	522. 75	
Paints.....	629. 07	
Lighting fixtures.....	798. 27	
Tiling.....	271. 50	
Heating.....	1, 281. 00	
Material.....	590. 69	
Hauling.....	121. 42	
Express.....	39. 61	
Miscellaneous labor.....	47. 80	
Tin work.....	25. 00	
Shrubs.....	112. 45	
Miscellaneous supplies.....	51. 62	
Electric fans.....	165. 87	
Total cost of building.....		\$28, 951. 88
Equipment (old).....	725. 00	
Equipment (new).....	480. 00	
Total equipment.....		1, 205. 00
Total building.....		30, 156. 88
Total plant.....		30, 806. 88

## PRESENT FINANCIAL STATUS.

Current assets .....	\$427. 58
Fixed assets.....	31, 870. 28
Prepaid assets.....	327. 92
Total.....	32, 625. 78

## LIABILITIES.

Current liabilities.....	\$13, 226. 37
Capital.....	19, 399. 41
Total.....	32, 625. 78

*Financial statement, July 31, 1920, to February 28, 1921.*

RECEIPTS.		EXPENSES—continued.	
Pictures.....	\$967. 01	War tax.....	\$87. 90
Rentals.....	1, 714. 56	Postage.....	44. 30
Baths.....	3. 25	Janitor.....	490. 00
Bowling.....	608. 80	Advertising.....	. 55
Total.....	3, 293. 62	Bowling.....	20. 53
		Insurance.....	286. 11
		Interest.....	428. 21
		Taxes.....	127. 48
EXPENSES.		Total.....	3, 340. 23
Pictures.....	\$716. 10		
Rental.....	642. 50		
General.....	496. 55		

**Uses of building.**—Agricultural demonstrations by the county agent are held in the auditorium, as well as meetings of the farm bureau. Motion pictures are given by the community company once or twice a week, according to the season. The people had been going by auto to Peoria, 22 miles away, to see motion pictures and at the same time to do their trading. The pictures have helped to keep the people at home and maintain the building. Furthermore, a large number of the patrons are farmers, who bring considerable trade to the town. The large auditorium makes it possible to secure the best talent for the lecture course. Plays are given by the students of the high school and by the dramatic association. Other auditorium activities are school commencement exercises, community sings, minstrel shows, political conventions and rallies, church conventions, etc.

The Old Timers' dances bring out large crowds. The Young People's Dancing Club meets here twice a week. The motion-picture shows are generally followed by dances. Various organizations, such as the firemen, give dances frequently, but the event of the season is the annual grand ball.

The high school has no gymnasium, and the community building gymnasium is used for all school purposes, a small rent being paid. The high-school students use it three evenings per week and the grade-school children one, for gymnasium work and basket-ball practice. The community basket-ball team uses it for similar purposes two nights per week. Tournaments, including games with surrounding towns, take place in the auditorium once a week in season. These are the big athletic events of the year, and the whole community turns out to back its team. Roller skating is another

popular form of amusement in the gymnasium. Athletic field meets are held on the playground. The bowling alleys are in frequent use and bring in considerable revenue. Shower baths and locker rooms are available for both men and women.

The week following each Easter is community dedication week, at which time the dedication of the building is commemorated. During this week community spirit is strengthened and the differences of the past year are straightened out. Everyone in the community has an allotted task to perform. All money derived from these activities goes to reduce the indebtedness on the building. The forerunner of these, and the one that set a standard for the others, was the original dedication week, April 21 to 26, 1919. Various bazaars, shows, and entertainments were put on in order to obtain money for the building fund, and total receipts of the week were \$3,740.

**Results.**—This building seems to have accomplished the purposes for which it was erected. In a recent letter the secretary states:

I will say that this building has proved a big incentive to our young folks to remain here and to assume some of the responsibilities of the social activities of the community. Our young men are remaining on the farm and taking more interest in their work. Our community would be lost without this building.

#### FARMING AND TOWN COMMUNITY—MOTION-PICTURE FEATURE.

The citizens of Bethel, Conn., were not satisfied with the quality of motion pictures available. Nor were they content with the manner in which other forms of local amusement for young people were being conducted in the town. A meeting of people interested in civic welfare was called to consider the question.

There was already in the village a sectarian community house, erected by the Congregational Church in 1910, at a cost of \$11,000. It was decided to purchase this building and make it a general social center, so attractive that all the people of the village would be glad to use it. Accordingly, in 1919, a community association was formed and incorporated. Nonassessable, nondividend paying stock was sold to 440 holders at \$10 per share, realizing \$4,400. The building was mortgaged for \$5,000, and \$2,500 was received from activities connected with the building. Thus \$11,900 was available, of which \$7,500 was paid for the old building, \$1,000 for a motion-picture machine, and \$2,500 for repairs, kitchen equipment, etc. During the first year \$500 of the mortgage was paid off and it was voted to continue this practice yearly.

The building is a modern two-story brick structure (Fig. 13). It provides on the first floor lounging and reading room, lunch room, billiard room, bowling alleys, shower-bath room, and lavatories. On the second floor are an auditorium and balcony, picture booth, and movable stage.

The building is controlled by a board of 24 directors, elected by the members of the association. The Ladies' Community Club, as an auxiliary, and various committees and a steward are of much assistance.

**Uses of building.**—Motion pictures are presented by the association two nights a week, under direction of a committee which reads reviews of pictures in motion-picture magazines and orders films accordingly. Most of the films prove satisfactory. The association made a profit of \$2,500 from pictures in 1920.

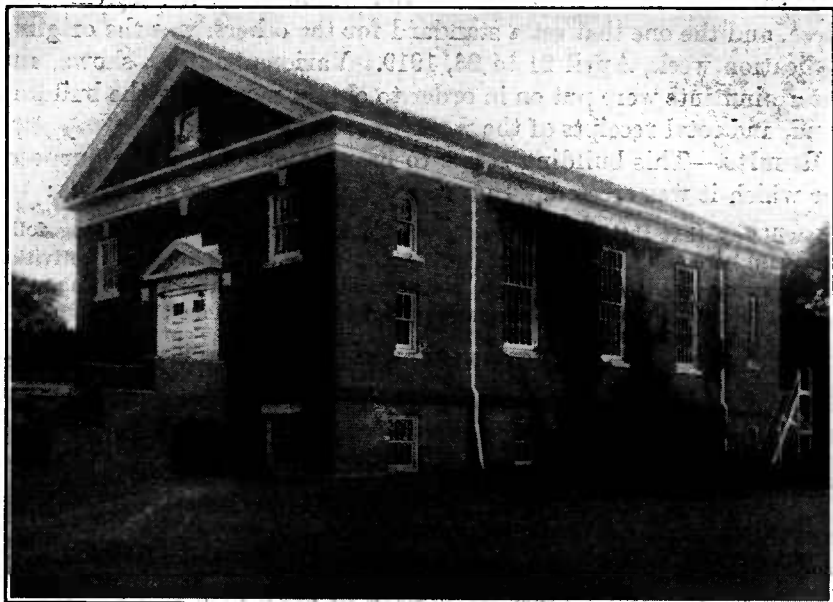


FIG. 13.—Bethel (Conn.) Community House.

The Fairfield County Farm Bureau uses the auditorium for the purpose of giving agricultural demonstrations. The Grange sometimes meets here.

The Woman's Improvement Association, of 100 members, uses this room in its campaign for civic betterment. Among other activities housed by the auditorium are the annual Chautauqua, the public-lecture courses given by church, school, and other local organizations, and local entertainments by community, church, school, Boy Scouts, or other organizations.

As the house is a community affair, all political parties feel free to use the auditorium for their meetings and campaign rallies.

When the movable opera chairs are taken out, the auditorium becomes available for dancing. The association gives a community dance once a week through the winter months.

The reading room, the game room, and the bowling alleys are popular features. The shower baths are available to all people of the community, whether members of the association or not. Revenues from the refreshment stand help to maintain the building.

#### FARMING AND TOWN COMMUNITY—COMMERCIAL CLUB FEATURE.

Until the year 1918 the Northfield Commercial Club, of Northfield, Minn., was of the old-fashioned kind. Its principal aims were to secure factories for the town and furnish social diversions for its members. About this time the club was joined by a few men of real vision. They realized that the town of Northfield, with a population of 3,200, was the center of a rich farming community. A dozen farmers' clubs were included within the trading center. The community advertised itself as the Holstein center of America, there being more than 6,000 purebred Holstein-Friesian cattle in the county. The farmers were well organized, having cooperative elevators, creameries, and cheese factories.

The progressive members of the club recognized that about the only members of the community who produced new wealth were the farmers; that the farmers were supporting the men in town, who in turn were supporting the schools, churches, and lodges of the town, but that the farmers had nothing to say concerning the government or affairs of the town; that the interests of the farmers who traded in the town were similar to the interests of the people of the town; and that they should receive more consideration.

Out of these ideas grew a strong movement for town and country cooperation with a community building as a center. The commercial club was reorganized as the community club and farmers were put on the same basis as town members. Two hundred new members were added, one-third of them being farmers.

There was in the town a Y. M. C. A. building, erected a few years before by popular subscription, which had just been vacated. It was decided to take over and reconstruct this building. Quitclaim deeds were secured from the 76 stockholders without cost on condition that the building be used for community purposes. Fourteen thousand dollars was expended on the old building, the fund being raised by (1) contributions of 350 people (30 per cent farmers), \$6,900; (2) contributions of municipality of Northfield, \$1,000; (3) individual donation, \$6,000; and (4) entertainments and sales, \$650. It is a modern, three-story brick, stone-front structure. The first, or municipal floor, has council room, police headquarters, room for community leader, lobby, women's rest room, coat room, and lavatories. The second, or community club floor, has a combined assembly, reading, and lounging room, an office, game room, billiard room, and

cloak room. The basement contains a large assembly hall, well-equipped kitchen, and cloak room. Maintenance expenses are \$2,700 per year, covered by dues, \$1,500; municipal rental, \$1,000; receipts from food sales and entertainments, for salary of matron of rest room, \$300.

The building is owned and controlled by the community club, women's council, and municipal council through a board of directors of two representatives of each body.

**Uses of building.**—The seven farmers' clubs from the surrounding country meet in the hall at various times to carry out different parts of their economic program. The Holstein Association, composed of some of the best farmers and business men, meets here to promote in various ways the industry upon which the prosperity of the country people and, through them the town, so largely depends. At times all the farmers' clubs meet here in convention to further the cause of the agricultural community. The women's clubs frequently give bazaars and sales for the benefit of the matron of the rest room.

The assembly room has solved one of the great needs of the town, providing a convenient place where State and county organizations may hold their conventions, and be welcomed and entertained in a becoming way. Such local bodies as the women's clubs, the study club, and the Red Cross find a welcome here, as well as such activities as community mass meetings, sings, lectures, celebrations, local plays, and lecture courses. The different political parties hold their conventions, caucuses, and rallies in this room, and at election time it is the voting place.

The first floor is largely given over to the town government. The various town officials have their offices there, and there the community nurse has her headquarters, where she holds clinics, inaugurates health campaigns, promotes welfare work, and is visited for consultations. From here the community leader of the town maps out and directs the program for community betterment along civic, social, and recreational lines. The women's rest room is on this floor and here the women from the country find a comfortable place to prepare and eat their lunches, to check their packages, to leave their children while shopping, and to rest and read. (Fig. 14.) On this floor the town operates its free employment bureau, and here is found the neighborhood exchange, where handiwork is sold.

The conveniently arranged and comfortably furnished assembly room is available for small club meetings and assemblies.

**Results.**—Northfield has just engaged a full-time community leader and it is expected that the demands on the building and facilities henceforth will be greater than in the past. During the year ending May 31, 1921, there were held in the building 147 meetings of organizations, including 47 by farmers, 61 by city organizations, and

39 under the auspices of the American Legion, besides many committee meetings.

The erection of this building seems to have accomplished practical results for the town, as the secretary reports that since its erection the number of autos coming to town has increased threefold and that much business which formerly went to other towns is now coming to Northfield.

#### FARMING AND TOWN COMMUNITY—CHURCH-CONTROL FEATURE.

In recent years there has been a great increase in the number of church community buildings. Being solicitous of the social and



FIG. 14.—Women's rest room in the Northfield Community House.

moral as well as the religious welfare of the community, the church makes available a building where the people may engage in social and recreational contact surrounded by the best influences. Sometimes this building is a combined union church and social center; often it is a separate building under the control of one or more denominations but available for the use of all the people, whether church members or not.

One the best types of buildings controlled by a church, from the standpoint of usefulness, is that at Winnetka, Ill. This town, with a population of 3,800, did not have a place for young boys to meet. It was the custom of the men's club of the Congregational Church to give an annual dinner to the boys' clubs of the town. At one



of the dinners the boys petitioned the church to buy a certain old barn and move it to the church grounds, so they could have it for a meeting place. Members of the men's club argued that there should be a better place than that for the boys to meet, and the community house was the result of the agitation thus started.

The church itself is somewhat in the nature of a community church. Its membership consists of village and country people. It describes itself as "a church without creeds, dogma, and sectarianism," and states that "the differences between the several denominations are no longer, for the most part, even interesting." This spirit is in evidence in the community house. The first conception of the building as a meeting place for young boys grew to include "universal service to every man, woman, and child in the village; a center for wholesome recreation and the development of character." It is open to all, irrespective of religious beliefs and affiliations, is nonsectarian, and "as democratic as a street car."

The plant represents an outlay of \$41,500, subscribed by 100 townspeople of different faiths, and was entirely paid for before dedication. In return for exclusive use on Sunday mornings, the church guarantees it against future deficits. Operating expenses for a recent year, including salaries and motion-picture operation, were \$9,920, and returns from dues, contributions, and motion pictures, \$7,125, and from the church, under its guarantee, \$2,795.

The building contains a large auditorium, stage and dressing rooms, kitchen, assembly room, neighborhood room, 11 clubrooms, 2 offices, 2 billiard rooms, girls' dressing room, and showers and lockers for men and women. The auditorium has 600 movable chairs, and is fully equipped as a gymnasium.

The deed for the building is in the name of the trustees of the Congregational Church, who turned the administration of the building over to a board of governors, not necessarily members of any church. At present two of the board are members of the Episcopal Church and four of the Congregational Church. A director elected by the board is in immediate charge of operation. In the use of the building, except on Sunday mornings, the Congregational Church stands on a par with every other organization of the village.

**Uses of building.**—This building and its uses present a striking example of the value of organized direction of community activities. In the open country, in small villages, or in communities of meager financial resources this, though desirable, is not always possible.

Winnetka has developed to an especial degree both the legitimate group spirit and the much to be desired community spirit. It promotes group activities for both old and young and for all elements, and at the same time fosters the desired united endeavor and com-

munity consciousness through general public meetings and celebrations of the people as a whole as they work and think and play together.

This is brought about through the careful planning of voluntary committees and workers and a paid director and assistant, who direct various clubs and classes, and a voluntary hostess organization which furnishes a representative at all times in the building to answer questions, give advice, and exercise friendly supervision.

There are 12 club rooms in the building. A club may be organized by the director, or it may organize itself and be furnished with a leader by the director. Boys and girls who can not afford to pay



FIG. 15.—Annual vegetable exhibit in the Winnetka Community Building.

dues are enabled to do work for their membership fees. The following is a list of representative clubs of recent years:

**Boys.**—Boy Scouts; the Winnetka Boys' Club (the first club organized), social purposes; the Community House Squares, motto: "Every boy on the square;" Midget Athletic Club (also conducted debates); Seminoles, studies life occupations; Iron Men, makes mechanical things; Afternoon Club (open to all boys between 10 and 14), table games and addresses for boys having no attractive place to go on Sunday afternoon; boys' brass band; boys' orchestra.

**Girls.**—Winnetka Girls' Club, sewing, recreational; Willing Workers, sewing, making scrap books, and social; Busy Bees, active largely in making things for others; Camp Fire Girls.

**Adults.**—Women's Society of Congregational Church, meets twice a month; Fortnightly Club, literary and recreational program; North Shore British American Club, recreational and social; English class, for foreigners desirous of learning to speak English; parents class, a study course taking up the

problems of home life; teacher's training class; horticultural society (Fig. 15); choral society; the dramatic club; mothers' club, under the leadership of the visiting nurse; infant welfare society, sewing; first-aid class.

**Auditorium.**—There are two motion-picture machines in the building. Pictures carefully selected from prominent exchanges are shown every Friday evening. When a commercial picture company wanted to open up a show house in town, protests of residents stating that the community-house pictures were sufficient led the town council to deny the request. Exhibition drills are given in the auditorium by the Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls. Halloween parties are a feature.

A yearly schedule is prepared for the use of the gymnasium on week day afternoons and evenings for classes for boys, girls, men, and women in gymnastics, calisthenics, social and fancy dancing, boxing, wrestling, volley ball, indoor baseball, basket ball, or motion pictures; gymnastic exhibitions are frequently given by the various classes.

Political parties frequently make use of the auditorium for their meetings and rallies.

The assembly room is available for small meetings and, as is the gymnasium, also for dancing and masquerade parties. There are two rooms in the basement for pool, billiards, and table games. Other features are a rifle range, a photographic dark room, and shower baths. In one of the offices a bureau of information is conducted. The neighborhood room is fitted up by the women of the village to be as nearly like a home library or parlor as is possible in a public building.

**Results.**—Is this building meeting expectations? Is it worth the price? The committee writes (1921) after 10 years of operation:

Why do we find contentment in Winnetka? Because we, as a village, insist upon decent surroundings and diversions for ourselves and our girls and boys. What does Winnetka do to discourage influences that would cause us anxiety and unrest? It provides a wholesome means to amuse and develop the mind and the body of every person in the village; it provides a community house.

### CONCLUSION.

If the value to the neighborhood of a community building is to be estimated by the uses to which it is put and the needs it satisfies, then this study would seem to indicate that the community building, as a general rule, must be accorded a high valuation. Not all communities which own such houses are awake as yet to their full possibilities, but there are enough examples of efficient use to warrant the conclusion that the community house is destined to prove an effective instrument in the improvements of rural social conditions.